The Cleveland Museum of Art

Press Release

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KATHARINE LEE REID EXPANDS CURATORIAL DIVISION

CLEVELAND — Katharine Lee Reid, director of the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA), today announced an expansion of the museum's curatorial division — that part of the staff responsible for exhibitions and works of art in the permanent collection. The expansion includes the addition of new positions, the redistribution of responsibilities among the current staff, and the appointment of one of the new positions. These are the first major changes in the structure of the curatorial area since Reid's predecessor, the late Robert P. Bergman, established the division and appointed Diane De Grazia to be the museum's first chief curator in 1995.

De Grazia, who has held the triple position of The Clara T. Rankin Chief Curator *and* curator of paintings and curator of drawings, will focus on the growing responsibilities of chief curator. She has assigned her paintings responsibilities to Sylvain Bellenger, whose current position as 19th-century European paintings curator is broadened to curator of paintings. Taking on De Grazia's duties overseeing the drawings collection will be Carter E. Foster, who has become associate curator of drawings.

The dual position of curator of contemporary art and curator of photography, long held by Tom E. Hinson, will be divided into two full-time positions, with Hinson focusing exclusively on the photography collection. Since 1973, Hinson has been responsible for building the museum's outstanding photography holdings. The museum will begin the process of searching for a new curator of contemporary art.

Finally, the vacant curatorial position that oversaw the areas of art of the Americas (pre-Columbian and Native American) and African art has been divided into two separate posts. Susan E. Bergh, who has worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and on the curatorial staff of the Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York, has been appointed to the new position of associate curator of art of the Americas. In conjunction with Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), the CMA has also created a position overseeing African art.

The joint appointment of an Africanist by CMA and the university will enhance the CMA/CWRU Joint Program in the History of Art and Museum Studies, a unique partnership between a major research university and a comprehensive urban museum. The search process has just started for this post, which includes both curatorial and teaching responsibilities.

In announcing the changes, Reid commented: "We deeply appreciate the opportunity afforded us by generous supporters such as the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and numerous private donors to expand and enrich our curatorial staff. The basis of an art museum's ability to amass great collections and to produce innovative programs and exhibitions is the expertise of its staff. The reconfiguration allows us to advance the curatorial operation on the strengths of our current staff while adding important new specialists. These are all exciting developments as we reaffirm our commitment to the care and interpretation of the great works of art in our trust, and as we prepare to showcase these collections in renovated and expanded facilities."

Said De Grazia: "I am thrilled with the direction the curatorial staff is taking and with Katharine Reid's support of our initiatives. By promoting Sylvain Bellenger and Carter Foster to heads of departments, the paintings and drawings areas will get the full attention of two well-qualified and highly admired curators with international reputations. I am looking forward to focusing on the needs of all the departments in the division — curatorial, exhibitions, registrars, and photo imaging."

Bellenger, who takes over the paintings area, came to the CMA last fall from Blois in France's Loire Valley, where he had been director of the Castle of Blois and chief curator of the Municipal Museums of Blois since 1992. His energies are currently focused on his responsibilities as CMA curator for the major traveling exhibition **Faces of Impressionism: Portraits from American Collections**, which opens here May 28. Associate curator Foster joined the CMA staff in 1996 as assistant curator of drawings. He organized the museum's first "painting in focus" exhibition, based on CMA's *Sleep—Figure Study* by Jean-Bernard Restout and associated paintings and drawings, and wrote the related article in the scholarly annual *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* for 1998. He has focused on co-organizing (with De Grazia) the upcoming traveling exhibition of *Master Drawings from the Cleveland Museum of Art*, its accompanying catalogue, and the forthcoming catalogue of the collection of European drawings before 1900.

Hinson explained his own move, which he has thought about for some time: "The current responsibilities as well as future growth in the areas of collection management and private collector relationships, public programming, and audience development really require dedicated curators for both photography and contemporary art. Katharine genuinely understands the important place of photography in a comprehensive museum and wants to allocate appropriate staff resources to it. I welcome this

(more ...)

opportunity to pursue one of my great curatorial loves. For the first time, I'll be able to center all my time and energies on a single curatorial responsibility.

"And although my focus is now more concentrated, I'm still deeply committed to painting and sculpture of our time. While continuing the wonderful personal relationships developed over the years with collectors and artists, I look forward to forging and strengthening my alliances with people in the photography field and to supporting CMA's new curator of contemporary art in every way I can."

Hinson's two most recent major exhibitions speak to the dichotomy of his position: **Legacy of Light: Master Photographs from the Cleveland Museum of Art** (1996–1997), the first major exhibition of CMA's photography collection; and **Cleveland Collects Contemporary Art** (1998–1999), surveying key artists and trends that have defined contemporary art during the past 15 years, through 70 works by 60 artists, lent by 30 individuals and companies in the Greater Cleveland area.

Hinson's catalogue of CMA's photography collection was published in 1997. He has organized 76 smaller exhibitions of photography — mostly very recent works — since he established a schedule for five such shows per year beginning in 1986. Currently on view in that series is **Lynn Geesaman Photographs: Poetics of Place**. Following the Geesaman show will be **19th-Century French Portrait Photography from the Cleveland Museum of Art** (May 27–Aug. 9), complementing **Faces of Impressionism**. Hinson is also focusing on preparations for the CMA venue of **Image and Enterprise: The Photographs of Adolphe Braun**, organized by the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design (June 18–Aug. 27).

Bergh just obtained her Ph.D. in art history from Columbia University, writing her dissertation on "Pattern and Paradigm in Middle Horizon Tapestry Tunics." Her M.Phil. and M.A. degrees from Columbia also focused on ancient South American art. Her B.A. is from New York University's department of fine arts. She has served as research assistant in the Metropolitan's department of the arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, where she worked on two temporary exhibitions. Her work at Brooklyn focused on cataloguing and reinstallations of Andean and Mesoamerican collections. She will begin her duties at CMA when she finishes an appointment on the faculty of Texas Christian University, Fort Worth.

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The CMA is regarded worldwide for the superb quality of its comprehensive collection, which includes nearly 40,000 works of art from all times and places, from ancient Egypt to the present. Particularly notable are its comprehensive Asian collection of some 4,800 works, its medieval European art, and its pre-Columbian holdings. Its 600,000-plus visitors annually comprise local residents, tourists, schoolchildren, and scholars from throughout the United States and the world. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays, plus Wednesday and Friday evenings until 9 p.m.; closed July 4, Thanksgiving Day, Dec. 25, and Jan. 1. For more information, call **1-888-CMA-0033** or **(216) 421-7350**, or visit the museum on the Web at **www.clevelandart.org**.

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